

**DISTRICT  
OF  
COLUMBIA  
BOARD OF  
EDUCATION**



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STATEMENT OF PEGGY COOPER CAFRITZ

PRESIDENT OF THE D.C. BOARD OF EDUCATION

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OVESIGHT HEARING ON ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL  
REFORM IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

MAY 9, 2003

CHAIRMAN DAVIS AND MEMBERS ON THE COMMITTEE, I AM PEGGY COOPER CAFRITZ, PRESIDENT OF THE D.C. BOARD OF EDUCATION. IT IS MY PLEASURE TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TO DISCUSS H.R. 684 AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

THE VIEWS CONTAINED IN THIS TESTIMONY ARE MY OWN AND DO NOT REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF THE D.C. BOARD OF EDUCATION. ON JULY 17, 2002, THE BOARD ADOPTED A RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE CONGRESSIONAL IMPOSITION OF VOUCHERS ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. SOME OF MY COLLEAGUES CONTINUE TO OPPOSE A FEDERALLY IMPOSED VOUCHER PROGRAM AND ARE WAITING FIRST TO BE CONVINCED THAT CONGRESS WILL INCREASE ITS COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION WILL REVISIT THIS ISSUE AT OUR MAY 2003 BOARD MEETING. WE ALL WANT HOMERULE BUT THE

EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN CANNOT WAIT FOR THAT CONSTITUTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT.

THERE IS AGREEMENT AND UNANIMITY ON THE GOAL OF EQUITABLY EDUCATING EVERY CHILD IN OUR CITY. ANOTHER BELIEF THAT WE SHARE IS THAT THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS NEED GREATER RESOURCES TO OVERCOME THE LEGACY OF DISINVESTMENT. FOR ALL THE SAME REASONS THAT IT COSTS COMPARATIVELY MORE TO RUN THE D.C. GOVERNMENT THAN THE SURROUNDING JURISDICTIONS, IT STANDS TO REASON THAT IT WOULD COST MORE TO RUN THE D.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS. EVEN BEFORE YOU DEDUCT FOR THE STATE COSTS WE MUST BEAR, WE SPEND CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN CONTIGUOUS JURISDICTIONS.

#### **LEGACY OF LACK OF INVESTMENT**

EVER SINCE MY COLLEAGUES AND I ASSUMED OFFICE, WE HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN REFORMING A BROKEN SCHOOL SYSTEM THAT HAS NEVER RECEIVED SUFFICIENT RESOURCES NECESSARY FOR SUSTAINING REFORM. WE FOUND AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM WITH DETERIORATING SCHOOL BUILDINGS, UNDERACHIEVING SCHOOLS WITH TOO MANY STUDENTS WHO LACKED THE ACADMEMIC SKILLS TO PREPARE THEM FOR THE FUTURE, AND POOR PERSONNEL AND BUDGETARY SYSTEMS. WE FOUND A SYSTEM THAT HAD BEEN BUILT ON A LEGACY OF TOO MANY BROKEN PROMISES, TOO MANY FAILED EXPERIMENTS, AND TOO FEW RESOURCES TO OVERCOME THE MANY YEARS OF NEGLECT. SIMPLY PUT, CONGRESSMEN, WE HAVE TO KEEP THE TRAINS RUNNING IN THIS BROKEN SYSTEM EVERY DAY WHILE WE WORK HARD AND FAST AT BUILDING A REAL SCHOOL SYSTEM – THE KIND THAT HAS NOT EXISTED IN D.C. FOR DECADES.

WITH THE HELP OF MANY COMMITTED TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, PARENTS, AND LEADERS IN THE COMMUNITY, WE ARE BEGINNING TO ADDRESS THIS LEGACY OF DISINVESTMENT. WE ARE BEGINNING TO EXPERIENCE A MODICUM OF SUCCESS THAT WILL LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE REFORM. WE HAVE EMBRACED REFORM AND ALL THAT IT EMCOMPASSES. WE HAVE EMBRACED COMPETITION WITH THE HOPE THAT EVERY CHILD REALIZES HIS FULL POTENTIAL. THE BOARD OVERSEES A SUCCESSFUL CHARTER SCHOOL PROGRAM THAT SERVES 16 CHARTER SCHOOLS WITH 2,880 STUDENTS. WE ARE TACKLING THE BUREACRATIC INERTIA THAT CAN IMPEDE REFORM. WE HAVE DEVELOPED, WITH COUNSEL FROM MCKINSEY COMPANY, AND ARE IMPLEMENTING A BUSINESS PLAN FOR STRATEGIC REFORM THAT SERVES AS OUR ROADMAP FOR EDUCATIONAL AND MANAGEMENT CHANGE. BECAUSE OF THESE EFFORTS, MANY OF THE DEFICIENCIES CITED IN THE LEGISLATIVE NARRATIVE USED TO JUSTIFY H.R. 684 ARE NOW UNTRUE.

OUR STUDENTS ARE IMPROVING ACADEMICALLY. WE HAVE RAISED TEST SCORES IN APPROXIMATELY 60 PERCENT OF DCPS SCHOOLS AND INCREASED READING PERFORMANCE AT NEARLY EVERY GRADE LEVEL. WE ARE TRANSFORMING 15 HISTORICALLY LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS. WE HAVE WITNESSED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE GAINS IN ALMOST ALL OF OUR ORIGNIAL TRANSFORMATION SCHOOLS, INCLUDING DRAMATIC GAINS OF 15 TO 20 PERCENT IN TEST SCORES AT A NUMBER OF THEM. WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS WITHIN OUR SCHOOLS. WE HAVE RECRUITED AN OUTSTANDING TEAM OF MANAGERS AND EDUCATORS. WE ARE IMPLEMENTING NEW ACCOUNTING, PERSONNEL AND PROCUREMENT SYSTEMS THAT WILL ASSIST US IN BETTER MANAGING AND CONTROLLING RESOURCES. WE HAVE PREPARED A PERFORMANCE-BASED BUDGET THAT WILL LINK EXPENDITURES TO PROGRAMS AND ASSIST DECISION-MAKERS AND OUR

PARENTS IN ASSESSING OUR ACADEMIC AND MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE.

### **LACK OF RESOURCES IS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE**

BUT WE ARE IN DANGER OF REGRESSING AND HALTING OUR REFORM EFFORTS. WE DO NOT FEAR CHOICE, BUT WE DO FEAR THE LACK OF FINANCIAL INVESTMENT IN OUR EFFORTS TO REFORM THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. IF ONE GOAL OF CHOICE IS COMPETITION, IT IS DISHONEST TO NOT GIVE DCPS THE TOOLS IT NEEDS TO COMPETE. OUR BUDGET IS BEING CUT CONTINUALLY AND WE ARE NOW FORCED TO CUT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN OUR CLASSROOMS. THIS FISCAL YEAR WE BEGAN WITH A BUDGET OF \$743.7 MILLION AND IT HAS BEEN REDUCED TO \$713.5 MILLION. RATHER THAN SPENDING MOST OUR TIME IN IMPROVING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, MY COLLEAGUES AND I SPEND A DISPROPORTIONATE AMOUNT OF TIME WIELDING THE BUDGETARY AXE. ONE WAY CONGRESS CAN HELP IS BY PROHIBITING THE CUTTING OF THE SCHOOLS' BUDGET AFTER THE BEGINNING OF THE FISCAL YEAR. THIS WILL REQUIRE YOUR DIRECT FINANCIAL SUPPORT. THE MANAGEMENT OF A CHILD CENTERED AGENCY DIFFERS FROM THE MANAGEMENT OF OTHER AGENCIES.

THE BOARD PROPOSED A FISCAL YEAR 2004 LOCAL OPERATING BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF \$847.8 MILLION, WHICH FUNDED OUR BASE LEVEL BUDGET OF \$740.5 MILLION, \$64.6 MILLION OF MANDATED COSTS, AND \$44.6 IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM INVESTMENTS. THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL ARE RECOMMENDING AN OPERATING BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF \$742.6 MILLION, AN INCREASE OF ONLY \$29.1 MILLION ABOVE OUR REVISED FY 2003 BUDGET OF \$713.5 MILLION.

THE BOARD REQUESTED A SIX-YEAR CAPITAL BUDGET OF \$2.0 BILLION TO IMPLEMENT OUR MODERNIZATION PROGRAM. THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL HAVE RECOMMENDED ONLY \$511 MILLION OVER 4 YEARS, INCLUDING FISCAL YEAR 2004. AS A CONSEQUENCE, WE WILL BE FORCED TO SEVERELY REDUCE OUR MODERNIZATION EFFORTS. THE LEGISLATIVE NARRATIVE OF H.R. 684 FOUND THAT "MANY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA'S 146 SCHOOLS ARE IN A STATE OF TERRIBLE DISREPAIR, INCLUDING LEAKING ROOFS, BITTERLY COLD CLASSROOMS, AND NUMEROUS FIRE CODE VIOLATIONS." OUR SITUATION IS SO BAD THAT WE ARE THE ONLY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM I CAN FIND THAT DOES NOT HAVE A CYCLICAL MAINTENANCE BUDGET. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BUILT ALMOST ALL OF THESE SCHOOLS, WHICH AVERAGE 63 YEARS OF AGE. THE DISTRICT MANAGED THESE BUILDINGS UNTIL 1991 WHEN IT RETURNED THEM TO DCPS IN A HEINOUS STATE OF DISREPAIR. THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS DID AN ASSESSMENT IN 1996 CONCLUDING THAT 90 PERCENT OF THEM NEEDED TO BE REPLACED OR GUTTED AND REBUILT! THE BOARD HAS MADE SOME PROGRESS IN MODERNIZING ITS FACILITIES, BUT IN MANY RESPECTS WE HAVE JUST BEGUN. FOUR NEW SCHOOLS HAVE OPENED. SIX MORE ARE IN CONSTRUCTION FOR 2003 AND 2004 OPENINGS. TEN SCHOOLS ARE IN DESIGN, SLATED FOR GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONIES THIS YEAR. CONGRESS CAN GREATLY HELP BY FUNDING OUR CAPITAL COSTS OR PAYING THE FINANCING EXPENSE OF ACQUIRING BONDS TO PAY FOR OUR MODERNIZATION EFFORTS AND FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS.

THE CITY'S RECOMMENDED OPERATING AND CAPITAL BUDGETS DO NOT MEET OUR NEEDS. THOSE BUDGETS WILL NOT FUND ASBESTOS ABATEMENT, STRUCTURAL MAINTENANCE IMPROVEMENTS, START-UP FUNDS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL EQUIPMENT TO BRING OUR ART, MUSIC, AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS UP TO MINIMUM NATIONAL STANDARDS, OR A TEN-WEEK SUMMER PROGRAM FOR MATH AND

READING TO BETTER ASSIST OUR ACADEMICALLY LOW-PERFORMING STUDENTS. A SYSTEM-WIDE TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM TO RETAIN NEW TEACHERS CANNOT BE IMPLEMENTED.

THE LEVEL OF POVERTY OF OUR STUDENTS IS OVER 50 PERCENT. THE RESEARCH SHOWS THAT UNLESS THEY ARE PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY READY, THEY WILL NOT LEARN. THEREFORE, WE NEED A SUPPORT SERVICE NETWORK AVAILABLE IN EACH SCHOOL. WE HAVE STATED A PROGRAM WITH THE MAYOR THAT WORKS VERY WELL. EACH CHARTER SCHOOL AND 16 PUBLIC SCHOOLS HAVE A MENTAL HEALTH WORKER. BUT THE NEED IS FAR GREATER. CONGRESS CAN HELP BY FUNDING THESE SUPPORT SERVICES.

WITHOUT THESE INVESTMENTS, THE JOB OF REFORMING PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL WILL BE RENDERED UNDOABLE.

### **VOUCHER PROGRAM CAN BE A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS**

I BELIEVE THAT THE VOUCHER PROGRAM ENVISIONED UNDER H.R.684 IS A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS. I BELIEVE THAT THERE IS MUCH ROOM UNDER THE TENT FOR ANY IDEAS OR APPROACHES THAT HELP OUR STUDENTS. UNDER H.R. 684 A PRIVATE, A NONPROFIT CORPORATION, KNOWN AS THE 'DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SCHOLARSHIP CORPORATION', WILL ADMINISTER A VOUCHER PROGRAM AND WILL DETERMINE STUDENT AND SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM. THE CORPORATION WILL HAVE A BOARD OF DIRECTORS, COMPRISED OF SEVEN MEMBERS, SIX APPOINTED BY THE PRESIDENT AND ONE APPOINTED BY THE MAYOR. THE LEGISLATION AUTHORIZES FUNDING IN THE AMOUNT OF \$7 MILLION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2004; \$8

MILLION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005, \$10 MILLION FOR EACH OF FISCAL YEARS 2006 THROUGH 2008.

THE VOUCHER PROGRAM CAN BE GREATLY ENHANCED BY HAVING THE PARTICIPATION OF THE WASHINGTON SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION AND THE BLACK STUDENT FUND. SEVERAL YEARS OLD AND ESTABLISHED BY PHILANTHROPISTS, THE WASHINGTON SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION PROVIDES SMALL SCHOLARSHIPS TO DISTRICT STUDENTS TO ATTEND PRIVATE SCHOOLS. THE BLACK STUDENT FUND, LAUNCHED BY SOME OF THE DISTRICT'S MOST AUGUST CITIZENS OVER THIRTY YEARS AGO, HAS SENT HUNDREDS OF LOW-INCOME D.C. STUDENTS TO THE FINEST PRIVATE SCHOOLS. FORTUNATELY, WE DO NOT HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH. WE HAVE ORGANIZATIONS IN THIS COMMUNITY THAT HAVE A SUCCESSFUL TRACK RECORD ADMINISTERING VOUCHER-TYPE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS. THEY SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE NEW ENTITY. I DO NOT SUPPORT GIVING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THIS PROGRAM OVER TO A CURRENT PRIVATE PROGRAM BECAUSE WE STILL NEED THE PRIVATE PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITY GENERATD BY SUCH PROGRAMS.

CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO HAVING GREATER PARTICIPATION OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT ELECTED AND APPOINTED EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA IN THE SELECTION OF THE BOARD MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATION. BECAUSE WE CONSIDER THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT A WORTHY NEIGHBOR, THE PRESIDENT SHOULD HAVE TWO APPOINTEES AND EACH HOUSE SHOULD HAVE ONE APPOINTEE. THE MAYOR AND THE COUNCIL SHOULD APPOINT ONE MEMBER. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION IN CONSULTATION WITH THE SUPERINENDENT, IN ITS ROLE AS THE STATE EDUCATION AGENCY, SHOULD APPOINT THREE MEMBERS. OF THESE THREE, ONE SHOULD BE ONE OF THE MAYOR'S APPOINTEES TO THE D.C. BOARD OF EDUCATION.

BOTH THE BLACK STUDENT FUND AND THE WASHINGTON SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION SHOULD HAVE A REPRESENTATIVE ON THE BOARD.

THE LEGISLATION DOES INCLUDE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS AND PRIVATE SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS. I BELIEVE THAT H.R. 684 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS THAT PARTICIPATE IN THE VOUCHER PROGRAM SHOULD BE OPEN AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL STUDENTS – STUDENT WITH DISABILITIES, ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS, AND HOMELESS STUDENTS. I AGREE WITH THE INCOME LIMITS THAT HAVE BEEN PLACED IN H.R. 684 BECAUSE THEY ARE CLOSELY TIED TO THE REQUIREMENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FREE LUNCH PROGRAM. IN ALL PROBABILITY, THERE WILL NOT BE ENOUGH FUNDS TO SATISFY DEMAND FOR THE NUMBER OF AVAILABLE VOUCHERS. THESE LIMITED RESOURCES SHOULD THEREFORE, BY WEIGHTED LOTTERY, BE DIRECTED TO THOSE WITH THE GREATEST NEED.

I FURTHER BELIEVE THAT IF THE PROGRAM IS TO BE SUCCESSFUL, THEN THE VOUCHER PROGRAM MUST PROVIDE SOME ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO HELP PARENTS NEGOTIATE THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS OF THE PAROCHIAL AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS. THE ADMISSIONS AND SELECTION PROCESS CAN BE A DAUNTING EXPERIENCE FOR WELL TO DO PARENTS. THOSE BARRIERS SHOULD BE REMOVED FOR ALL PARENTS WHO WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VOUCHER PROGRAM.

THE LEGISLATION DOES REQUIRE THAT THE CORPORATION SHOULD EXERCISE ITS AUTHORITY IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BOARD OF EDUCATION OR ENTITY EXERCISING ADMINISTRATIVE JURISDICTION OVER THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND OTHER SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. CONSULTATION SHOULD INCLUDE THE



REQUIRED PARTICIPATION OF THE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OTHER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS TO ENSURE THAT THE PROGRAM COMPLEMENTS THE EFFORTS OF PUBLIC AND CHARTER SCHOOLS TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF ALL STUDENTS.

I BELIEVE THAT PRIVATE SCHOOLS SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN EXISTENCE FOR A MINIMUM OF FIVE YEARS IN ORDER TO BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VOUCHER PROGRAM RATHER THAN THE THREE YEARS RECOMMENDED IN H.R. 684. IF THE PROGRAM IS TO WORK, THEN THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS MUST HAVE A RECORD OF SUCCESS. OVER HALF OF OUR CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE FAILING ACCORDING TO NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND STANDARDS BECAUSE ANYBODY WAS ALLOWED TO APPLY, WHICH PRODUCED A LOT OF FLY BY NIGHT FAILURES. WE MUST PROTECT THIS NEW PROGRAM FROM SUCH MISTAKES. WHAT GOOD IS THE VOUCHER PROGRAM IF STUDENTS LEAVE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR LOW PERFORMING PRIVATE SCHOOLS? TO ASSIST PARENTS IN SELECTING AND EVALUATING THE PERFORMANCE OF PARTICIPATING PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND FACILITATING CHOICE, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ANNUALLY SHOULD PUBLISH PROFILES INCLUDING TEST SCORES FOR PUBLIC, CHARTER, AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND ASSIGNING VALUES TO THOSE SCORES TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR PARENTS TO COMPARE THEIR RELATIVE PERFORMANCE. THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SHOULD ASSUME THE EXPENSE FOR MAILING A COPY OF THIS MANUAL TO EACH HOUSEHOLD IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ON AN ANNUAL BASIS.

I BELIEVE THAT THE VOUCHER PROGRAM SHOULD BE LIMITED TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. ALLOWING STUDENTS TO ATTEND PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN MARYLAND AND VIRGINIA DIMINISHES OUR CIVIC CULTURE AND DENUDES OUR NEIGHBORHOODS. WE SHOULD BE DOING ALL WE CAN TO STRENGTHEN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS AND PROMOTING COMMUNITY SPIRIT. PROMOTING PROGRAMS THAT ARE NOT

LOCATED HERE IS DETRIMENTAL TO OUR GOAL OF REINVESTING HUMAN AND FINANCIAL CAPITAL IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. WE WANT OUR CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY LIFE AND THAT INCLUDES GOING TO SCHOOL IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND LEARNING ABOUT THEIR ROLE AS CITIZENS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

I BELIEVE THAT CONGRESS CAN ENSURE THAT THE VOUCHER PROGRAM DOES NOT ADVERSELY IMPACT THE PUBLIC AND CHARTER SCHOOLS. AS YOU MAY KNOW, CONGRESS ENACTED A PER PUPIL STUDENT FUNDING FORMULA THAT FUNDS STUDENTS EQUITABLY. THE BUDGET FOR DCPS AND THE CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE DEPENDENT UPON THE NUMBER OF THE STUDENTS THAT ATTEND THEIR SCHOOLS. WHEN A STUDENT OBTAINS A VOUCHER AND LEAVES THE PUBLIC OR CHARTER SCHOOL, THEN THE MONEY WILL VANISH. CONGRESS CAN HELP BY INCLUDING LEGISLATIVE LANGUAGE ALLOWING DCPS TO COUNT THE CHILDREN WHO ARE IN DCPS NOW AS PERMANENT BASELINE.

IN ADDITION, EACH CHILD SHOULD RECEIVE A SCHOOL I.D. NUMBER AND THE MONEY SHOULD FOLLOW THE CHILD. IF A CHILD LEAVES A CHARTER OR PRIVATE SCHOOL TO RETURN TO DCPS, THEN THE MONEY MUST ACCOMPANY THE CHILD. IN THE FUTURE, VOUCHERS SHOULD BE FEDERALLY FUNDED BY THE ESTABLISHED PER PUPIL FUNDING FORMULA. IF THEY ARE DOING THE JOB OF FULLY EDUCATING THE CHILD, IT DOES NOT COST THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ANY LESS. WE ARE BEYOND THE ERA OF NUNS ON POVERTY VOWS STAFFING THOSE SCHOOLS.

IMPLEMENTING THESE SUGGESTIONS WILL FACILITATE PARTICIPATION IN THE VOUCHER PROGRAM AND ELIMINATE FINANCIAL HARM TO THE PUBLIC AND CHARTER SCHOOLS.

## **CONCLUSION**

WE ARE ALL FUSTRATED BY THE SLOW PACE OF PROGRESS IN IMPROVING PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION. BUT THAT PROGRESS IS IN DANGER IN BEING THWARTED BY THE REDUCTION IN BUDGETS AND THE CONTINUED LACK OF ADEQUATE INVESTMENT. IF SUFFICIENT RESOURCES ARE NOT PROVIDED, WE ARE AGAIN MAKING EMPTY PROMISES TO OUR CHILDREN. VOUCHERS SHOULD NOT REPLACE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC AND CHARTER SCHOOLS. THE REALITY IS THAT THE MAJORITY OF CHILDREN WILL CONTINUE TO RELY UPON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. WE MUST BE CLEAR THAT NOT ALL OF THESE SYSTEMS ARE PANACEAS. OVER 50 PERCENT OF OUR CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE NOW FAILING. WHILE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS HAVE MADE DRAMATIC GAINS WITH THE CHANGES THAT CARDINAL MCCARRACK HAS MADE THROUGH THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL CONSORTIUM, THEIR STRUGGLE IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF MANY SCHOOLS IN DCPS. IF YOU DO NOT GIVE DCPS THE TOOLS TO COMPETE WITH CHARTER SCHOOLS AND VOUCHERS, THE CRIMINAL NEGLECT WILL CONTINUE TO BE VISITED ON A MAJORITY OF OUR STUDENTS.

WE OWE TO EVERY CHILD THE COMMITMENT AND EFFORT TO TRY ANY PROGRAM THAT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED TO IMPROVE THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF OUR CHILDREN. I AM COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH YOU TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL.